SUMMER FLOUNDER

(06/09 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - Recovering - The 2008 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment indicates the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring based on the current biological reference points. However, the target fishing mortality (F) and spawning stock biomass (SSB) have yet to be achieved. Fishing mortality has steadily decreased since the early 1990s. Spawning stock biomass has generally increased since the early 1990s.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1999-2008 - 3,470,872 lbs./\$ 6,237,948

2008 Commercial Landings and Value –2,406,601 lbs./\$ 5,235,996 (quota-managed)

Average Recreational Landings 1999-2008 - 249,811 lbs., 2008 - 81,581 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (5 lbs.) 1999-2008* - 395, 2008* - 273

Average Recreational Commercial Gear License (RCGL) Landings 2002-2008* – 65,059 lbs., 2008* – 37,315 lbs.

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – In North Carolina, summer flounder is currently included in the Interjurisdictional FMP, which defers to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)/Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) FMP compliance requirements. Currently managed under Amendment 12 to the joint ASMFC/MAFMC FMP for Summer Flounder. Management measures include commercial quotas, minimum mesh sizes for trawls, minimum fish size limits, recreational bag limits, and a moratorium on new entrants into the commercial fishery. The NC Southern Flounder FMP also affects the harvest of this species.

Research and Data Needs – discard mortality estimates, age comparisons of northern and southern fish using scales and otoliths, continued expansion of observer coverage in the flounder trawl and scallop dredge fisheries, and species composition of recreationally released flounder.

Current Regulations – commercial: 14-inch total length (TL) minimum size limit in internal and ocean waters; closed season in Atlantic Ocean through November 1, once 80 percent of quota is harvested; bycatch trip limit of 100 lbs. during closed season. A License to Land Flounder from the Atlantic Ocean is required to land more than 100 lbs. per trip. recreational: 15-inch TL minimum size limit/8 fish creel limit for eastern estuarine waters and ocean waters north of Brown's Inlet with no closed season; 14-inch minimum size limit/8 fish limit in western estuarine waters and ocean waters south of Brown's Inlet with no closed season.

Harvest Season — commercial: January until 80 percent of the quota is harvested and November to December. recreational: Year-round with peak catches from June to August.

Size and Age at Maturity – 11 inches TL/1.5 years (females), 10 inches TL/1 year (males)

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 15 years/11 years

Juvenile Abundance Index 1999-2008^# - 9.7, 2008^ - 14.4 (not validated)

Habits and Habitats – Summer flounder are estuarine dependent members of the left-eyed flounder family that also include southern flounder and Gulf flounder. Summer flounder migrate offshore and south during fall and winter, and inshore and north during early spring and summer. Summer flounder spawn from November through March when water temperatures are between 53° and 67°. Larval summer flounder enter inlets and settle on sandy bottoms in higher-salinity areas of estuaries. After or towards the end of their first year, summer flounder move into ocean waters to spawn and join the coastal migratory groups.

- *Includes southern, summer and gulf flounders, but the majority are southern flounder.
- ^ Arithmetic mean from Pamlico Sound Survey (June only)
- # 1999 index excluded because sampling conducted in July

For more information, see **DMF Species Leads page**.